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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)  
SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 02//07

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#### ARTICLES:

- (1) Abe, Cheney play up solidarity despite changing Japan-US honeymoon relationship

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 3) (Abridged)  
February 22, 2007

As expected, the meeting yesterday between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US Vice President Dick Cheney served as a venue to play up the firm Japan-US alliance. But a sense of ease was apparently missing from the words of Cheney, who expects Japan's increased commitment

to the Iraq war, and Abe, who seeks America's continued cooperation on the North Korean issue. The visit to Japan by the Bush administration's number-two official who rarely makes foreign trips reflects subtle changes in the Japan-US alliance that once boasted a honeymoon-like relationship.

Cheney delivered a speech aboard the USS Kitty Hawk at the US naval base in Yokosuka yesterday in which he said:

"When the United States was attacked on September 11th, 2001, Japan made clear its firm commitment to joining the fight against terror. Japan has been one of the biggest donors for international efforts to reconstruct Afghanistan and Iraq."

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's decision to send Self-Defense Force troops to Iraq amid growing violence there strengthened the relationship between President George W. Bush and himself.

The Japanese ground troops have withdrawn from Iraq. Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma criticized the United States, and Prime Minister Abe visited Europe ahead of the United States. Even slight changes in Tokyo's posture would prompt the Bush administration, which is having a hard time due to its Iraq policy, to raise questions about Japan.

In his speeches and meetings with Japanese leaders, Cheney repeatedly expressed US gratitude for Japan. They are tantamount to a call for Japan to keep aligned with the United States in the war on terror. Given decisions by Britain and other countries to pull out from Iraq with no exit in sight for the war in the country, US expectations of Japan might turn into discontent.

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Japan, on the other hand, is baffled by the Bush administration's de facto shift in its policy toward North Korea. Adhering to the policy line of applying pressure on North Korea with the aim of resolving the abduction issue, Japan remains reluctant to provide energy aid to that country. The latest six-party talks ended in the form of confirming the framework of the US-DPRK talks that took place earlier in Berlin. The shift in the Bush administration's pressure-oriented North Korea policy has forced the Abe cabinet to come up with a new response.

As if to respond to Japan's concern, Cheney started off his meeting with Abe with the remark: "We are proud of joint efforts with Japan in the six-party talks. Settling the tragic abduction issue is a common cause of the two countries."

Cheney is only one of a few hawks on North Korea in the Bush administration. A former conservative senior US official thinks Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's role in decision-making has

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increased since Donald Rumsfeld, another hawk, resigned as defense secretary.

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In his meeting with Cheney, Abe highlighted close cooperation among Japan, the United States, and Australia by putting forward common values. Abe, who is troubled over his plummeting support rate, intends to come up with a new pillar for Japan-US relations before his visit to the United States during the holiday period from late April through early May. Subtle changes in the atmosphere surrounding the Japan-US alliance might affect the future of the Abe administration.

An outline of the Abe-Cheney meeting

7 Confirmed the irreplaceable Japan-US alliance.

7 Cheney expressed US gratitude for Japan's commitment to the war on terror.

7 Abe announced Japan's continued assistance to Iraq by means of the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift mission and official development assistance (ODA).

7 Confirmed close cooperation on the North Korean issue. Cheney announced that the settlement of the abduction issue is a common cause of the two countries.

7 Shared concern over China's military buildup.

7 Abe announced the steady implementation of the realignment of US forces in Japan and the acceleration of cooperation on missile defense.

7 Cheney supported Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

7 Agreed to step up cooperation among Japan, the United States, and Australia.

(2) Shigeru Yokota hands letter to Vice President Cheney for President Bush

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
Evening, February 22, 2007

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US Vice President Dick Cheney met Shigeru Yokota and his wife Sakie for about ten minutes this morning at the US Ambassador's Residence in Tokyo. Shigeru Yokota is representative of the association of the families of victims of kidnapped by North Korea. In the meeting, Cheney underscored that the US government would cooperate with Japan in resolving the abduction issue. He told them: "The abduction issue is important. Last night I talked about the issue with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. "

Sakie called for international cooperation, stressing, "People from many countries, including South Korea, were abducted (by North Korea)." Shigeru and Sakie Yokota handed over Cheney a letter addressed to President George W. Bush calling on the US government not to remove North Korea from its list of terror-sponsoring states. The vice president left Japan this morning for Australia.

(3) Editorial: We welcome US vice president's statement that abduction issue is common challenge for Japan and US

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
February 22, 2007

US Vice President Dick Cheney, who has been visiting Japan, has completed his main diplomatic schedule, meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Foreign Minister Taro Aso and other senior officials. Cheney and senior Japanese officials confirmed that Japan and the United States would continue their close bilateral cooperation.

It is significant that the meetings agreed to cooperate in resolving the abduction issue as a common challenge for Japan and the United States.

The recent six party talks agreed to provide assistance to North Korea in return for its decision to shutdown and seal its nuclear facilities. The agreement stipulates that the planned working group on normalization of Japan-North Korea relations will meet within 30 days.

North Korea, however, insists that the abduction issue has already been resolved. Some officials have noted that if there is no progress on the abduction issue, North Korea might sever Japan from the other six-party members but still eventually receive another 950,000 tons of heavy oil.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in their meeting briefed Vice President Cheney on his government's basic policy to take part in the

framework of the accord in the six-party talks but only provide North Korea with energy aid if progress is made on the abduction issue. The vice president responded: "Resolving the tragedy of abductees is a common challenge for Japan and the United States." It can be said that the framework by which Japan and the United States join hands to apply pressure on North Korea will be maintained.

There is concern that a meeting between the vice president and Defense Minister Kyuma was not held. The US side explained that no meeting took place because of Cheney's tight schedule. Referring in a series of his meetings with the Japanese officials to Japan's Air Self-Defense Force's (ASDF) transport assistance in Iraq and the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling operations in the Indian Sea, Cheney stated: "The United States greatly appreciates Japan's contribution." Therefore, it is extremely unusual for the vice president not to hold any meeting with the defense minister.

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Kyuma stated in January that the US government's decision to start the war in Iraq was "a mistake." He later criticized the United States over the relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, saying, "I have told the US not to talk so high-handedly." The reason why a meeting between Kyuma and Cheney was not set is probably because of US dissatisfaction with Kyuma's comments. How much was Kyuma aware of the mutual defense arrangements between Japan and the United States? He must not forget that young Americans risk their lives to protect Japan.

With his travel to Australia on Feb. 22 in mind, the vice president underscored: "Japan and Australia are important allies of the US." Japan and the United States share the perception that China's military buildup is unclear and too swift. The defense minister therefore should not do anything to cause the alliance to waver.

(4) Editorial: Why didn't US Vice President Cheney speak to Japanese public?

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)  
February 22, 2007

All state leaders, whenever they visit foreign countries, usually try to advertise their own policies or special products in earnest. But this is not true of United States Vice President Dick Cheney's Japan visit this time.

Cheney met Prime Minister Abe and other senior officials. He will also meet the parents of Megumi Yokota, a Japanese abductee, this morning to discuss the abduction issue. No meetings between the vice president and Japanese citizens or the press have been arranged during his stay in Japan. He only delivered a speech before US military troops on the USS Kitty Hawk at Yokosuka Port.

The vice president expressed to the prime minister his appreciation for Japan's cooperation in Afghanistan and Iraq. Abe and Cheney then reconfirmed the importance of the Japan-US alliance. As is the case in the United States, many people in Japan now take a harsh view about the Iraq war. Under such a situation, it would have been desirable to set the stage for the vice president to spell out the Bush administration's new Iraq policy of sending more troops.

Speculation about a coming attack on Iran by the US military have hit the headlines in the US and Europe recently, though the US government has dismissed the idea. We wanted to listen to an explanation from the number-two official in the Bush administration about how the US intends to deal with Iran.

The vice president reportedly has no plans to meet Defense Minister Kyuma, apparently out of his displeasure at Kyuma's remark that "the US decision to launch the Iraq war was a mistake." It might be taken that Cheney voiced his feeling by refusing to meet Kyuma.

One of the features of the Bush administration might be the refusing of meeting or talking with persons it does not like. It might have been effective if Cheney showed his generosity by meeting with the

defense minister when great attention is being paid on the aftermath of his controversial remarks.

The vice president's influence in the government is waning. It has been reported that the US government decided to go to war in Iraq at the vice president's insistence. The war has brought about pitiful results. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Ambassador to the United

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Nations Bolton, both of who were also called "hawkish," left the government.

Ex-Chief of Staff to Vice President Cheney Libby resigned over the leak of a CIA agent's identity and has been accused of lying to an inquiry into the leak case.

In part because the vice president was opposed to the policy of making compromises with North Korea in the six-party talks, State Secretary Rice reportedly pushed the six-party agreement without

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fully consulting with him.

If the Bush administration continues to give priority to the current dialogue line in dealing with North Korea, Cheney's presence may become weaker.

Former Vice President Gore came to Japan recently. Gore has continuously raised the alarm about global warming, such as through his film An Inconvenient Truth. Praising his documentary on the Earth's climate crisis, an American science magazine picked Gore as the most influential policy leader in 2006. Prime Minister Abe and his wife also watched this movie late last week.

Which task do the Japanese people expect the government to tackle, greater cooperation in the US administration's Iraq policy, as called for by Cheney, or efforts to address global warming? The answer is clear.

(5) 6-party talks: Japan, US out of gear; Concerns still remaining

SANKEI (Page 6) (Full)  
February 22, 2007

The recent six-party talks over North Korea's nuclear arsenals wound up on Feb. 13 with an agreement on a first step for North Korea to give up on its nuclear ambitions. US President Bush accentuated the agreement as an "important first step." The agreement, however, is creating a stir as it incorporated starting the work of removing North Korea from the list of rogue states standing behind terrorists. This triggered a sense of distrust within the Japanese government, with one official surmising that the United States might have changed its policy course. It has also left an unpleasant aftertaste within the US government, giving rise to discord. This report verifies the moves of Japan and the United States up until the agreement.

(Takashi Arimoto, Washington, and Jiro Otani, Political Section)

"It's a strong message of the vice president for those in and outside." With this, a White House official underscored the significance of a meeting scheduled for today between US Vice President Cheney, now visiting Japan, and the parents of Megumi Yokota, one of the Japanese victims abducted to North Korea. Megumi Yokota was 13 years old when she was kidnapped to North Korea. According to the White House official, the vice president is not opposed to the president's decision but is "critical in his heart of hearts" about starting the work of removing North Korea from the terrorist-sponsor list. The vice president's meeting with the Yokotas purports to show the stance of playing up cooperation with Japan, according to the official. "It's also a constraint on Secretary of State Rice, who pushed talks without consulting well

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with us," the official added.

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A US newspaper, the New York Times, reported in its Feb. 16 edition that after the bilateral talks in Berlin on Jan. 16-18 between the United States and North Korea, Secretary Rice directly negotiated with the president and got the go-ahead for talks with North Korea without consulting with the office of the vice president or with the Department of Defense. Why did Secretary Rice agree to start the work of delisting North Korea as a terrorist sponsor and settle the issue of financial sanctions within 30 days? One US government official explained Secretary Rice's change of mind in this way: "Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has now resigned, so there's no 'lightening rod,' and Secretary Rice is under fire in the administration. She is an A-student, and she doesn't get used to being criticized by others. She can't stand it, so she's upset. She wanted to concentrate her efforts on the Middle East problem, so she needed to reach an agreement. Then, she left the vice president and other hardliners in the lurch."

The Japanese government also knew that the United States and North Korea would meet in Berlin. On Jan. 10, just before their meeting in Berlin, Kenichiro Sasae, director general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, flew to Washington.

One of Japan's primary concerns was about the abduction issue. Japan therefore did not want this problem to be left behind. North Korea is said to have strongly urged the United States in the Berlin talks to remove the name of North Korea from the US list of terrorism-supporting states. The abduction issue is one of the reasons for the United States to designate North Korea as a country backing terrorism. Removing North Korea from the terrorism support list would lead to dividing Japan and the United States on the abduction issue.

As Japan learned from the United States about what was talked about in its Berlin meetings with North Korea, the Japanese government's concern became a reality. "Why did the United States accept North Korea's demand?" So saying, one Japanese government official voiced a sense of distrust.

On the evening of Feb. 6, just before the six-party talks resumed, Shoichi Nakagawa, chairman of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's policy board, met with US Assistant Secretary of State Hill, who was visiting Japan, at the party's headquarters. "Don't tell me the United States will change the category of North Korea as a terrorism-supporting country," Nakagawa said. Hill nodded. After the meeting, Sasae, who was also in the meeting, thanked Nakagawa. "I'm glad you said that," Sasae said to Nakagawa.

"The United States can't provide aid to North Korea," Hill said in a meeting with his Japanese counterparts. Hill added, "Because that won't pass Congress," So saying, Hill implied expectations for Japan's participation in energy aid to North Korea. However, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who won high public popularity with his "resolute attitude" on the abduction issue, could not easily respond to such aid.

Japan will not provide aid to North Korea without seeing progress in the abduction issue. The Japanese government decided on this basic course of action and carried it through at the six-party talks.

The six-party agreement this time incorporated starting the work of delisting North Korea as a backer of terrorists. However, Bush learned of Japan's determination on the abduction issue from a report. Then, Bush called Abe on Feb. 14 after the six-party talks.

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"Japan alone will not be left behind," Bush told Abe over the telephone.

The United States and North Korea reached a general agreement in

their Berlin talks. On Feb. 8, the six-party talks actually resumed. However, the atmosphere changed as China, which hosted the six-party talks, handed over a draft paper of agreement.

"When I came back from Berlin, I found that Pyongyang's reaction was harder than I imagined," North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan was quoted as saying. In the six-party talks, Kim made a number of demands, such as fuel oil in aid amounting to 2 million tons a year, in exchange for halting North Korea's nuclear facilities.

"The draft paper incorporated only 50,000 tons in exchange as the first step," a Japanese government official recalled. "Moreover," this official added, "it was not mandatory, and so North Korea was angry." Kim brought up the issue of financial sanctions. Hill said, "We agreed to announce that after the talks." So saying, Hill unveiled what was discussed in the Berlin talks.

The six-party talks were initially set to end Feb. 12. The six parties-centering on China-continued coordination till late that day. North Korea, which needed aid from other countries, retracted its demands gradually. "One million tons, and only once," Hill said in a meeting on the night of Feb. 12. With his index finger up, Hill urged North Korea to accept the overtures. In the end, North Korea caved in. Just as the six-party talks ended, however, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported that halting the nuclear facility in Yongbyon would be a "temporary step."

Appearing on a US Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) program, Hill said, "Life is too short to follow everything that was reported by a state-run broadcast in Pyongyang." With this, Hill disregarded the KCNA report. However, it has left a point of contention that could be reignited.

#### (6) Poll on Abe cabinet, political parties

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
February 20, 2007

#### Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of a survey conducted in January.)

Q: Do you support the Abe cabinet?

Yes	45.3	(48.4)
No	42.7	(38.9)
Other answers (O/A)	3.0	(4.4)
No answer (N/A)	9.0	(8.3)

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the foregoing question)  
Give up to two reasons for your approval of the Abe cabinet.

I can appreciate its political stance	31.3
It's stable	10.2
The prime minister is trustworthy	25.3
There's a fresh image of the prime minister	39.8
I can appreciate its economic policy	5.5
I can appreciate its foreign policy	17.8
Because it's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New	

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Komeito	10.4
It's better than its predecessors	8.3
O/A+N/A	5.1

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the foregoing question) Give up to two reasons for your disapproval of the Abe cabinet.

I can't appreciate its political stance	38.6
It's unstable	33.0
The prime minister is untrustworthy	21.7
The prime minister lacks political experience	17.4
I can't appreciate its economic policy	23.4
I can't appreciate its foreign policy	11.0
Because it's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New	

Komeito	10.6	
It's worse than its predecessors		8.2
O/A+N/A		4.2

Q: What issues do you want the Abe cabinet to pursue on a priority basis? Pick as many as you like from among those listed below, if any.

Economic, employment measures	
52.0	
Fiscal reconstruction	
21.1	
Tax reform, consumption tax	
28.5	
Social security reform, including pension and healthcare systems	
61.7	
Low birthrate countermeasures, including childcare support	
34.8	
Educational reform	
23.3	
Administrative reform, including public service personnel cuts	
18.5	
Social divide, including income gaps	
27.3	
Yasukuni Shrine	
3.6	
Asia diplomacy, including China and South Korea	
13.6	
North Korea	
32.8	
Defense, security	
9.7	
Constitutional revision	
6.2	
Crisis management, including disaster prevention	
7.2	
Public security, crime prevention	
18.1	
Environmental protection	
17.9	
Food safety	
14.5	
O/A + Nothing in particular + N/A	
2.4	

Q: Which political party do you support now? Pick only one.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	34.2	(39.3)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	12.0	(12.5)

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New Komeito (NK)	3.9	(2.5)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	1.4	(2.1)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	1.0	(1.3)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0.3	(0.2)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0.1	(0.1)
Other political parties	---	(0.1)
None	46.8	(41.5)
N/A	0.5	(0.6)

Q: Do you think Prime Minister Abe has been displaying leadership in steering his government?

Yes	18.1
No	57.4
Can't say which	22.9
N/A	1.6

Q: Do you think Prime Minister Abe has been tackling reforms in a positive way?

Yes	34.3
No	38.2
Can't say which	26.3
N/A	1.2



Q: Do you think Prime Minister Abe has been dealing appropriately with his cabinet ministers' scandals and gaffes?

Yes	18.7
No	55.8
Can't say which	24.0
N/A	1.4

Polling methodology

Date of survey: Feb. 17-18.

Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random sampling basis).

Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.

Number of valid respondents: 1,739 persons (58.0% ).

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